

wired!

Good afternoon, and welcome to our graduation. V First of all, I must say that is exiting for me to be here speaking for my class. Many people were, and probably still are, afraid of what I would say today. And rightfully so. I have stirred up enough trouble here during my brief stay to last the place awile, and I hope that will do it. Because what this place really needs right now is a little peace, and I am perfectly willing to let it have that, if it will only do the same for me.

I say people were worried about what I would say here, and I will take the liberty of suggesting that that wasn't because they doubted my dedication to Putney School. This place has meant a good deal to me over the past few years, through all my ups and downs and in and outs and what-not, and if nothing else, I hope that much is clear to those people who shared this time with me. P Thinking back on it, I guess all my troubles at Putney stemmed from my seeing the school as my own little toy. That wouldn't have been so bad, except that I kept trying to steal it away from bigger kids who wanted the same toy. But now I'm stepping into some people's fears, so I beat a hasty retreat back onto my purpose here, which is to speak for my class.

HA HA, fooled you again! Because as much as I'd like to speak for my class, and inteand to do so, my ulterior reason for wanting to speak today is that I wanted a space of time in which to speak TO my class, something they certainly wouldn't have allowed me to do unless they knew they would get credit for it, or had to sit through it in order to get their diplomas. In speaking to these youngsters I hope to let all the rest of you in on a big secret, which its that the people leaving Putney today are really no different than any of the people who made it possible for them to be here in the first place. Oh, sure, they look different. Clothing styles have changed, ethics and morals questioned and re-questioned, as is their way, but the end product is pretty much the same. Oh, oh, I get the sense that I'm letting some of you down. Good! that should quell the fear for awhile.

And although I say that, in essense, we are little different from our parents, we know somewhere else that that's not REALLY true. This may sound like a paradox or a Zen Koan, and maybe it is, but that's the crux of our problem and I think Putney is as good a place as any to begin my exploration of that problem. After all, Putney has brought us all together today in the first place, and the real, underlying question of course is what is it that makes this place

so amazing? I hope to answer that question also. But later.

First, let's say I told you that I wanted to get a whole group of people together, young and old, black white and in between, stick them on a hillside in Vermont and try to get them to learn how to live together. There's enough hate and war in the world, enough people battling each other and ignoring each other and hurting each other, I want to get a whole bunch of people together and teach them how to love and respect each other. Admirable goal, Tough enough to reach. Then throw in lots of hard physical work, designed to build us characters. Now, besides teaching how to live together, I am endeavoring to teach how to merely live which, I am reluctant to say, seems to be to work. With all this going on, you might observe, people will be pretty tired. Yes, I reply with a wry grin, but I also want to train the mind, through academic calastenics, because as everybody knows, the mind is a cruel master, but and excellent servant. Are you Crazy, you would scream, how can you expect people to doall this? Hard enough just learning to live together, but then you drag in all these classes. And they have A.M. Barn!! Well, at least you are leaving those cool New England evenings open for the relaxation these poor people will need. What?! What kind of Activities? This whole thing started out well, but it's turning into a bit of a mess. Why not just concentrate on teaching people to live together happily. That's what the world needs, not more over-worked, brow beaten, worrisome creatures. Just teach them how to live togehter!

This is where we run into that problem again. Because, although it's pretty clear that that is what the world needs, it would be hard for me to fanagle enough money our of all of you to sponser me and my fellows in this "Make Love, Not War" extravagansa. P Well, thank whomever, I don't have to worry about all of that. That is for Barbara and Jeri Howland to deal with, all the resposiblity I have a this point in my life is to end this speech so that we can get on with the proceedings. But I'm sure you catch my point.

Learning to live together is something that is very important to your sons and daughters, and in a different way than I am certain it must have been ^{important} to you when you graduated from High School. We were all born into the late sixties, you remember, lots of flowers and flower children, counter-culture and culture, pop-art and avant-gard, protests and birth control pills and loads of other stuff I need not even get into. All of that was pretty hard to swallow at a you age,

it seems it was pretty hard for many to swallow at any age, and if there's on point I really want to make today, this is it.^{P-f} Think about the period of time my friends and I were born, and maybe it will throw a whole new light on all of this. Or maybe not. Anyway, this was also the time of Richard Nixon, riots in Chicago and wherever else, and a war that was being brought right before our peering young eyes into our living rooms, where our parents sat smoking and relaxing after dinner. Our parents saw alot also, and we haven't forgotten that Hiroshima and Aushwitz are with us like they are with each of you, only different. We've had time to take a step back and try to understand what the hell all that yelling was about in the first place. What is it in man that could drive him to do those kinds of things to himself? And where can I run to avoid that in my own life?

We have grown up with the understanding, from day 1, that there is truley no place to run. And that's scary, so have a little sypathy. In the end, all horrible things happen out of fear anyway,^{L-P} and when you're young, it's hard not to be afraid.

But that passes, and we also saw real wonder at a young age. I can imagine myself, a year and a half old, unable to speak at awe of the world, and seeing a man land a foot smoothly on the moon. What a trip! We have grown up with that inside us, as one of the givens, and you've got to wonder what that makes us want for ourselves. After all, with our earth conquered and then even the moon, what could we want, the Sun? No, that's not it, you're looking the other way again. You almost let me get away with a cruel sin. I just said that man had CONQUERED the Earth. And you let me say it, Tom! Anyone who has been through a good long spring comping trip or five can tell you that man is really a long way from conquering the Earth. Asa a matter of fact, we've come quite aways from befriending it, which was our goal when we started out, wasn't it? You see, you almost missed it. That's what we started out to do, but somewhere we got the idea that we were conquerers instead of friends, and the whol thing got screwy from there, not just ecologicly, but in all aspects of our existance. If that's not clear to you, take a second and consider how much of your average day you spend conquering and how much of each day you spend befriending.^{P-P} It's no wonder those kids are on drugs!

And that brings me smoothly around to what I want to say to my classmates. First of all, my dear friends, it's not their fault, your parents, I mean. They're just frightened, that's all. They grew up in a time when man came as close as he has ever come to

destroying himself and our world, and that's scary. Not only that, but it was preceded by a time when it was hard enough just to make enough money to feed yourself, so go easy on the poor buggers. They're just scared, that's all, for themselves and for you. Fear dies slowly. However, it's important to learn from that fear. Fear is only the messenger, not the message. The message is that we're living in a terrible time and there's nowhere to run. "But wait!", I hear Steve yelling from his seat, "You can always run inside!" Yes Steve, that's true, but the trouble here is the same as the trouble at Putney, which is how to turn all this good-sounding stuff into something we can relate to. Like the idea of Community, the idea of Self is fleeting, perhaps true only so long as it is believed in. So what I have to say to my class is Believe In Your Self. Believe that within you is the univers, you know, emptiness is form and all that. Because wherever you take your Self, there you are, and even when you are with other people, you are with your Self. Don't be afraid to say that your Self is very upset with the way things are outside, ~~because~~ no matter where you take your Self, because if you don't make things right for your Self, no one else will. And more than even making things right FOR your Self, before that even, is making things right Inside your Self, which is where all things begin in the first place. Do you see my point, Paul? I figured you did, I just wanted to make sure the rest of us heard it. Because, although it is we who are being honored today, in a sense, it is also they, all those parents and Caldwells and what-not. I think our message is sound enough that even their ragged ears can catch hold. Believe in you Self, that part of you that knows the this whole world is in a mess and knows at the same time that happiness and peace can only come from within, and let that stuff out. The world needs it in order to get better. I don't think that they have all simply forgotten what that's all about; Happiness, Contentment. We'll show 'em happiness in a matter of minutes now, that's for damn sure!

But first, I have one more thing to say, and it's about what has brought us here today in the first place, and I don't mean the Tao. When I was talking before about how important it was for us to live together peacefully, I meant it, and that, in my humble opinion, is still the most admirable goal for any of us to strive to reach. Oh sure, Putney is still stuck with the classes and what-not, and I have already pointed out why all that rubbish is necessary, so there'

no need to get frightened again, I'm not running into any nasty tangent. No, indeed, what I want to point out is that there is something behind all that that led me to Putney in the first place, and then again after my dismissal, something that just would not leave me alone all the time I was gone, something rich and powerful, so powerful that though it's there all the time, we tend to forget all about it. Because from A.M. Barn to Evening Activities. past in-dorms and all the way around again, the real thing is that there's absolutely nothing great about Putney, it's just very harsh.

(WAIT FOR LAUGHTER (god willing))

There it is!